To Preserve and Protect: The Strategic Stewardship of Cultural Resources

Chapter 7. Safeguarding Heritage Assets:
The Library of Congress Planning Framework for Preservation
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Grids Showing Preservation Controls
Overview

The Library of Congress collections security program addresses four components — physical security, preservation, and bibliographic and inventory controls. Each of the components focuses on a critical aspect of ensuring that the collections will be available for future generations.

The Library's mission is to make its resources available and useful to the Congress and the American people and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations. To support that mission, the Library developed a comprehensive collections security planning framework in 1997. The security plan defined the threat to the collections and focused on creating a planning framework of physical security controls to protect the Library's collections. The plan also established parameters for the Library to protect its facilities, staff, visitors, and other assets.

The 1997 security plan categorized the Library's collections into a hierarchy of five risk levels, with the strongest protection accorded the Library's "Treasures" and other rare items and with lesser degrees of security controls for general and other collections. The original plan identified four cycles that collections items go through in the Library — in process, in storage, in use, and in transit — and subsequently added a fifth cycle, on exhibit. Using the five risk levels and the five cycles, the plan establishes a priority order for baseline protection standards for each item category in each Library cycle (see **chapter 4** of the book *To Preserve and Protect* and the chapter's grids showing physical security controls, posted on this Web site).

In 1998 and 1999, the Library developed a preservation security framework, now integrated in the overall collections planning framework. Development of the preservation security framework reflects the knowledge that collections deteriorate because of inherent chemical changes or any of a host of external forces, including the environment, handling, storage conditions, and disaster-like occurrences.

Chapter 7 of the book *To Preserve and Protect* refers to grids showing the Library's protection prioritization matrix of preservation controls for the five tiers of risk (from platinum down to copper) and the five life cycles that collections items go through at the Library. Definitions for the preservation controls are included. The preservation control measures depicted in this framework are grouped in seven primary areas: environment, emergency preparedness, storage, handling, needs assessment, physical treatment, and reformatting. The grids for **chapter 4** and **chapter 7** are dated (historical) documents, still evolving.